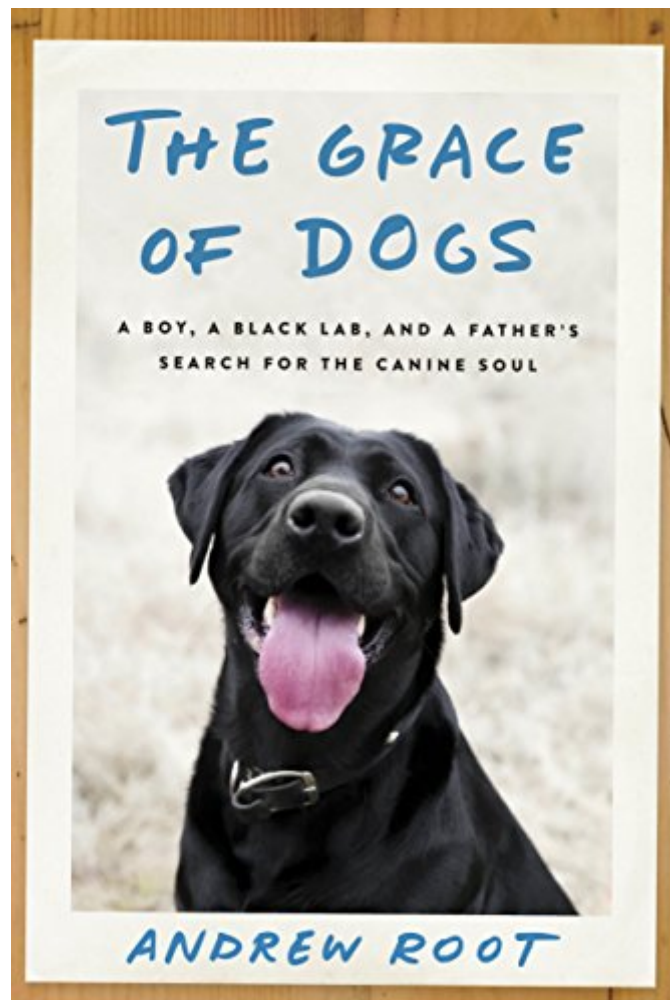




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# The Grace Of Dogs: A Boy, A Black Lab, And A Father's Search For The Canine Soul



## Synopsis

In the bestselling tradition of *Inside of a Dog* and *Marley & Me*, a smart, illuminating, and entertaining read on why the dog-human relationship is unique--and possibly even "spiritual." Dr. Andrew Root's search for the canine soul began the day his eight-year-old son led the family in a moving Christian ritual at the burial service for Kirby, their beloved black lab. In the coming weeks, Root found himself wondering: What was this thing we'd experienced with this animal? Why did the loss hurt so poignantly? Why did his son's act seem so right in its sacramental feel? In *The Grace of Dogs*, Root draws on biology, history, theology, cognitive ethology (the study of animal minds), and paleontology to trace how in our mutual evolution, humans and dogs have so often helped each other to become more fully ourselves. Root explores questions like: Do dogs have souls? Is it accurate to say that dogs "love" us? What do psychology and physiology say about why we react to dogs in the way that we do? *The Grace of Dogs* paints a vivid picture of how, beyond sentimentality, the dog-human connection can legitimately be described as "spiritual"--as existing not for the sake of gain, but for the unselfish desire to be with and for the other, and to remind us that we are persons worthy of love and able to share love. In this book for any parent whose kids have asked if they'll see Fido in Heaven, or who has looked their beloved dog in the face and wondered what's going on in there, Dr. Root delivers an illuminating and heartfelt read that will change how we understand man's best friend.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

So, I just got this book today, and in all honesty am only 2 chapters in. I cried only 2 pages into it, have laughed multiple times and it's completely hooked me. I'll update more when I finish, which I'm guessing will be tomorrow sometime. *~*

I jokingly refer to my pit bull as my "spiritual director." *~*  
"Shelbui" is a kind of force that grounds me and encourages me to contribute compassion to this world. This book helped me understand some of what is going on between us. What an interesting and captivating read. There's some science, some spiritual reflection, some parent/child relationships, some history, and lots of beautifully narrated human experience! It's a lovely read. *~*

A year ago, I adopted Arya, a black lab mutt who is an incredibly high energy puppy. She had been adopted before, but was returned to the shelter because the family didn't have the time or energy to deal with her. She came into my life at a time when I was beginning to face my own depression, while I was struggling through my final year of seminary, and when I was feeling exceptionally isolated in my internship site. The love this dog poured into my life was nothing short of God's grace made known here on earth. I've begun to refer to her as my Bishop, as she is the one who Pastors the Pastor. Andrew Root has masterfully captured everything I've experienced in my relationship with Arya, and have as of yet been unable to put into words. I'm grateful that he stepped out of the normal bounds of theological writing to compose a work like this that lives fully into what practical theology should be. This book reveals the often unexpected and unassuming ways that God's grace appears in our lives. I've found grace through Arya just as Root and his family found grace through Kirby. This powerful and easy to read book examines the love that every dog owner has known in a way that illuminates the means by which God's love and promises are made known - through our relationships, even those with our canine companions. I cannot possibly recommend this book enough!

I felt the topic was compelling for me, having had 2 dogs that had passed away. I still miss them and it has been 5 years. Book made me both cry and smile.

There is a spiritual connection between dogs and humans. This book proves it. When it is my time to go, I want to meet my children where they go. They have a soul!

This was one of the most thoughtful books I have ever read.

Great

More than words is all you have to do to make it real Then you wouldn't have to say that you love me  
Cause I'd already know- Extreme  
"More Than Words"  
In the summer of 2002, Andrew Root and his wife Kara were new residents of Princeton, New Jersey, leaving behind the hustle and bustle (and, oh, the freeways jammed with traffic) of life in Los Angeles. Root had recently survived his introduction to Princeton Seminary's PhD program. Both he and his wife had grown up with dogs, hunting dogs in particular. Kara's childhood included a black Lab who hunted, while Dr. Root's childhood dog was a Brittany Spaniel who attempted running away every chance she got. It was only a matter of time, they both knew, before they would get a dog. Then one day they went out for milk from a farm they'd discovered that had fresh milk and amazing ice cream, and on their way home a sign that led them to stop and look, peering inside at the naked pink belly of a sleeping little Lab who was panting like a fat man on a long run. With milk and ice cream growing warmer by the minute in the car, when they were asked if they wanted to hold him, the obvious answer was replaced by a mouth that uttered the complete opposite of common sense, and fifteen minutes later, they were on their way home with an eight-pound puppy, bags of dog food, etc. etc. All the other dogs in the Princeton theology circle were, of course, named after theologians. Calvin, Augustine, etc., so it only made sense that he names their dog Kirby, a name reminiscent of youthful summer days, baseball and Minnesota Twins' centerfielder Kirby Puckett. A name associated with being a winner by most standards, and certainly by baseball standards. It shouldn't surprise anyone that Kirby's favourite pastime was fetching balls. Or

snowballs. Two years later their first child, Owen was born, and as time passed, Kirby became aware that this little squiggly and squirmy thing that had arrived was a miniature sized human, those creatures capable of throwing his favourite tennis ball. And like that, he became Owen's best friend, his playmate, snack-mate, his entertainment, his pillow for television watching, and the self-designated watcher of Owen. Another two and a half years later, Maisy, Owen's new baby sister, comes home and Kirby's focus expands to include not just one, but two young charges. As a practicing theologian, Root explores the question of dogs having souls, the spiritual significance of the everyday, the caring of and for each other, including one his life's greatest joys, caring for and being cared for by a dog. In attempting to answer his son's questions, he asks his own. "Could our connection with a dog in some way endure even into eternity?" "One of the first things he discovered in his research was that Konrad Lorenz, a Nobel Prize winning zoologist, had been interested in the unique quality of dogs and their relationships with people. "The whole charm of the dog," he wrote, "lies in the depth of the friendship and the strength of the spiritual ties with which [the dog has] bound himself to man. And so his search began. The research he uncovers in this quest is pretty convincing from a theological point of view, a human-canine connection point of view, from several points of view. I wouldn't say that this book is heavy-handed in any specific religious viewpoint, but there how does one talk about the soul of a person or a dog without invoking a religious perspective? There are multiple religious viewpoints included, along with scientific research, his personal perspective on their interaction with their dog, and his personal recognition of what feels true to him. This was alternately interesting, charming, educational, emotional. I found that it had me often pause and reflect on what I had just read. Despite the potential for this being a heavy read, it's not. It has some of the essence of something closer to Bruce Cameron's "A Dog's Purpose" than "Marley and Me" which keeps it lighter, and beyond the research it includes many touching family moments, and insights adding a more personal touch. To sum it up for me, Root included a favourite quote of mine about the eternal nature of our relationship with our dogs. "If there are no dogs in Heaven, then when I die, I want to go where they went." "Will Rogers Amen. And because it bears repeating, from a dog's perspective: More than words is all you have to do to make it real. Then you wouldn't have to say that you love me 'Cause I already know. Recommended if you have a love of dogs, and / or an interest in the bond between

humans and dogs. Many thanks for the ARC provided by Crown Publishing / Convergent Books

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